

# **Executive Summary: Educator Preparation – Strengths and Areas for Improvement in Preparation Programs**

**Recruiting and Preparing Educators Series**

*July 2009*

# Eduventures Is The Leading Research and Consulting Organization for Colleges and Universities

- Currently works with over 300 colleges and universities across the country
- Focus exclusively on higher education, with over 2/3 of our analysts having worked directly for institutions of higher education
- Unparalleled breadth of expertise and depth of best practices and data
- At forefront of assessment work at schools of education

**Eduventures Schools of Education Learning Collaborative brings together university leaders to confront key challenges as a group. Members benefit by leveraging the economies of intellect, knowledge, and experience possessed by the collaborative memberships and Eduventures analysts.**

# Eduventures Members Shape and Underwrite Our Research



Arizona State University

Azusa Pacific University

Boston University

California State University, Chico

Drexel University

Eastern Kentucky University

Fordham University

George Mason University

Indiana University - Bloomington

Johns Hopkins University

Kutztown University of Pennsylvania

Lesley University

Long Island University

Louisiana State University

Loyola College in Maryland

Loyola Marymount University

National-Louis University

North Carolina A&T State University

North Georgia College & State University

Northeastern University

Northern Arizona University

Nova Southeastern University

Ohio University

Old Dominion University

Pepperdine University

Portland State University

Regis University

University of California, Riverside

University of California, Santa Barbara

University of Dayton

University of Illinois-Chicago

University of Kansas

University of Kentucky

University of Missouri - Columbia

University of North Texas

University of Pittsburgh

University of San Diego

University of Southern California

University of the Pacific

University of Wyoming

Western Michigan University

William Paterson University of New Jersey

Wright State University

### **A Renewed Focus on Teacher Quality and Preparation Programs Makes A Focus on Data-Driven Program Improvement Crucial**

- There are changing expectations for P-12 student learning, a focus on the acquisition of “21<sup>st</sup> century skills,” and changing student demographics that create new and important expectations for teacher education
- But there is criticism about the capacity of schools of education to prepare high quality educators, as well as mixed results from research
- And there is also concern about the ability of traditional schools of education to prepare sufficient quantities of educators to meet the needs of school systems
- Thus, it is imperative that research is undertaken to uncover strengths and weaknesses in existing programs and to identify improvements and innovations that contribute to better prepared and more effective teachers and administrators

This research is intended to inform innovation and improvement within teacher and administrator initial preparation programs, based on feedback from over 1,600 new educators across the U.S.

## This Summary Focuses on the Results of Part I of This Investigation

### Part I: Preparing Educators

- *How well-prepared do educators feel for their current positions?*
- *What differences exist between those prepared via alternative routes and those prepared via traditional routes?*
- *What key program components contribute to graduates' feelings of preparedness?*

Key Questions

### Part II: Professional Development and CE for Educators

- *What are the demographics of prospective students for various types of programs in education?*
- *What delivery mode (i.e. online, hybrid, on-campus) and course and program formats are attractive to prospective students?*
- *What criteria goes into a prospective student's decision to enroll at a college/university?*
- *What marketing channels and messages are attractive to prospective students?*

Methodology

#### Primary Data:

- National Web-based survey of current teachers and administrators who have received their initial certification/licensure within the past 5 years; 1504 teachers and 130 administrators surveyed throughout April/ May 2009

#### Primary Data:

- National Web-based survey of current teachers and administrators who have received their initial certification/licensure within the past 5 years; 1504 teachers and 130 administrators surveyed throughout April/May 2009

### Key Findings and Recommendations – Teacher Preparation

- **Overall, 78% of teachers who have entered the field in the last five years report that they felt prepared or very well prepared**
  - Teachers are most likely to report being very prepared or prepared to teach specific subject areas and to work productively with school colleagues
  - 41% say that they were unprepared or very unprepared to teach English Language Learners
  - About 1 in 5 report that they were unprepared or very unprepared to manage student behavior, differentiate instruction, work with families, integrate technology, and use assessment outcomes to inform instructional practice

**Schools of education should focus on identifying effective instructional practices for teaching English Language Learners, as projections show that this population will continue to increase. In addition, continued work to uncover best practices in the other areas where new teachers are unprepared can help SOEs to improve in these areas.**

- **Preparation is linked to retention – the vast majority of new teachers (91%) anticipate staying in the field and those teachers that report initially feeling well prepared are more likely to anticipate staying in the field**
  - Those who anticipate leaving typically cite dissatisfaction with the field, fit with their school, family/ personal reasons and the impact of the economy as reasons

**SOEs and districts should be partners in making sure that new teachers are well-prepared and supported in their first year to support effectiveness and retention.**

### Key Findings and Recommendations – Teacher Preparation

- **Urban, rural, and suburban teachers struggle with slightly different challenges upon starting their careers, and seek some different professional development support and offerings as a result**
  - Teachers working in suburban districts report feeling better prepared than their urban and rural counterparts in terms of working in their current school setting, using assessment strategies to inform their instructional practices, and managing student behavior

**Preparation programs alone cannot overcome all of the challenges that face new teachers in underserved schools, but programs can focus on uncovering best practices to help support students in these areas as much as possible.**

- **Elementary and secondary/ middle school teachers also report different areas in which they feel well or under-prepared**
  - Secondary educators struggle to a greater degree with managing student behavior, working with families, differentiating instruction, and working within their school setting
  - However, secondary educators feel better prepared to teach in specific subject areas, reflecting the subject matter focus at this level

**Secondary and middle school education programs should take these different strengths and weaknesses into account and provide teachers with greater support for managing student behavior, working with families, differentiating instruction, and support for working within their specific school setting.**

### Key Findings and Recommendations – Teacher Preparation

- **There are no statistically significant differences between overall preparation or intent to stay in the field based on pathway to preparation**
  - A high degree of diversity in the types of “alternative” pathway routes examined as well as in the types of “traditional, university-based” pathways
  - Program components (e.g. certain coursework, field experiences) are more important than strict comparisons between alternative vs. traditional, university based routes
  - However, students prepared via alternative route programs are more likely to rate their preparation to integrate technology and to teach English Language Learners more highly – and further investigation is needed to isolate why

**The right question to be asking appears not to be one that pits “alternative” programs versus “traditional, university-based” programs but is rather a question of effective program pedagogy, design, and components.**

- **Field placement duration plays a significant role in producing teachers that feel better prepared**
  - Longer field experiences are linked to higher levels of perceived initial preparation and the field experience plays a crucial role in preparing high quality teachers

**Schools of education should focus on ways to maximize the utility and value of the field experience. This investigation and others demonstrate the important link between the length of the field experience and preparation for the field.**

# In April – May of 2009, Eduventures Surveyed 1,634 Current Teachers and Administrators

## Survey Audience

- 130 Respondents are currently working as administrators (8%); 1,504 respondents are currently working as teachers (92%)
- Respondents are U.S. residents that have been working in their current positions for five years or less

## Survey Instrument

- The survey instrument was crafted in collaboration with SOE-LC member institutions to assess educators' perceptions of their preparation program as well as their ongoing education needs and preferences
- The survey instrument was programmed into a web-based format; respondents completed the survey online

## Data Collection

- Respondents were invited to participate via email by a third-party panel provider in partnership with Eduventures
- 16 SOE-LC members opted to invite their alumni to respond\*

## Data Analysis

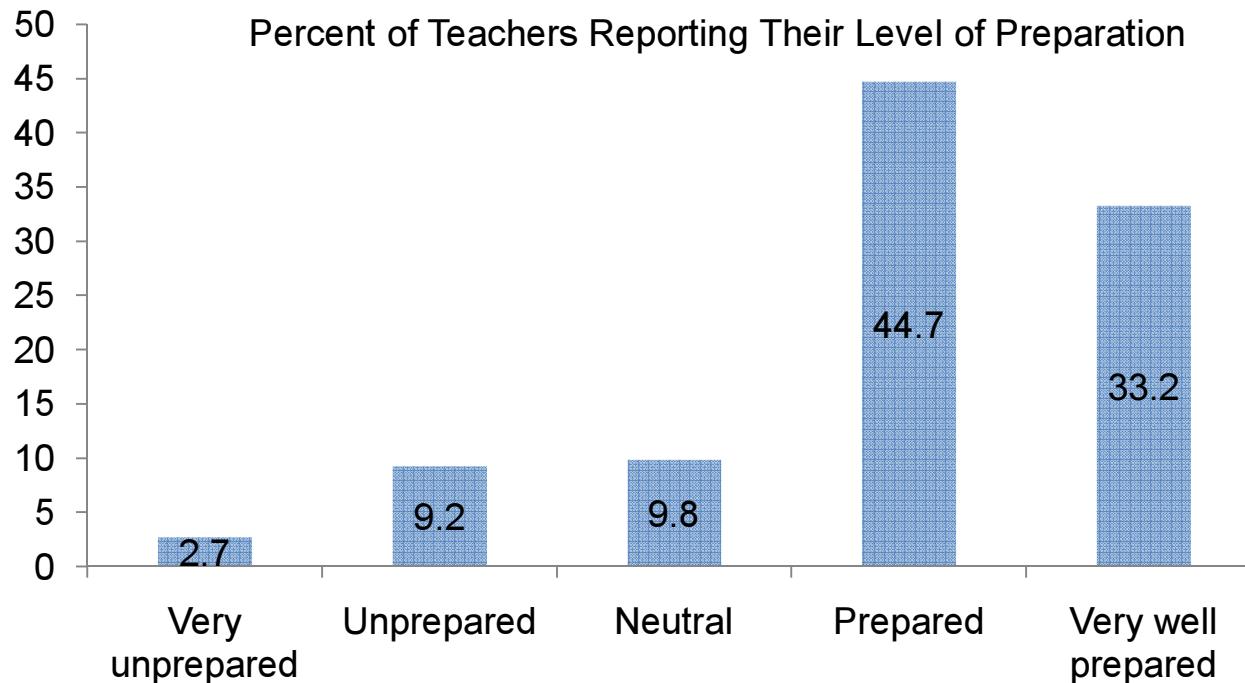
- Survey responses were analyzed using SPSS
- Only those differences or findings that are statistically significant are presented

# Data Collected Includes Data About Teacher Preparation Program Inputs and Outcomes

- Respondent characteristics:
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Time in field
- Employment Setting
  - Rural, urban, or suburban
  - Public, private, parochial, charter
  - Level of school
  - Type of teacher
- Inputs:
  - Alternative vs. traditional route
  - Level of degree preparation
  - Field placement duration
  - Program components
- Outcomes:
  - Perceived quality of initial preparation for reality of first job
  - Intent to remain in the field

This data reflects self-reported information provided by survey respondents.

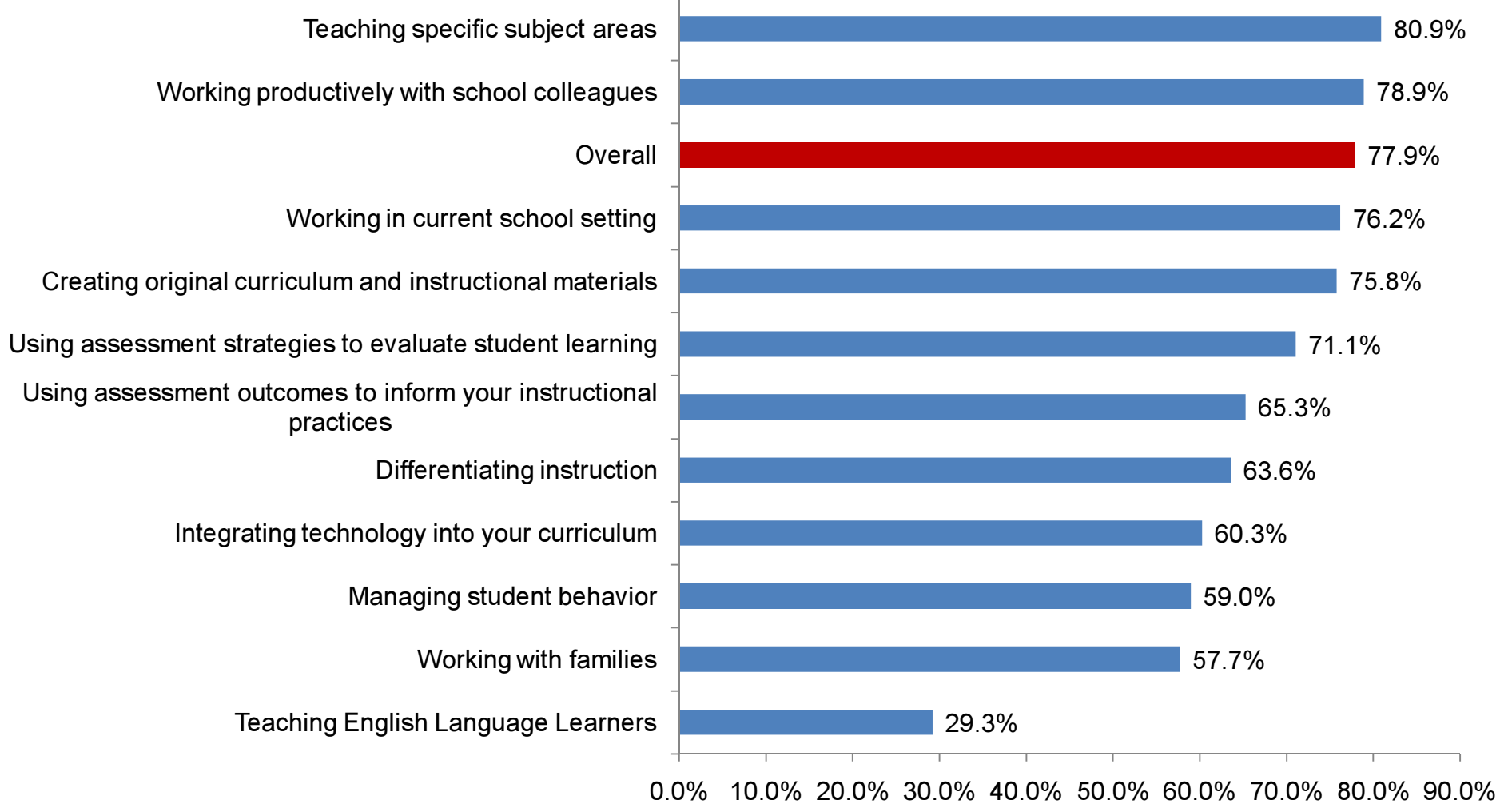
## Overall, 78% of Teachers Who Have Entered the Field in the Last Five Years Report That They Felt Prepared or Very Well Prepared



**Of course, the most important question is – why do some teachers feel more prepared than others and how can we produce better prepared teachers? In the following pages, we review how type of preparation, components of preparation, and other factors relate to new teachers’ perceptions of their preparation.**

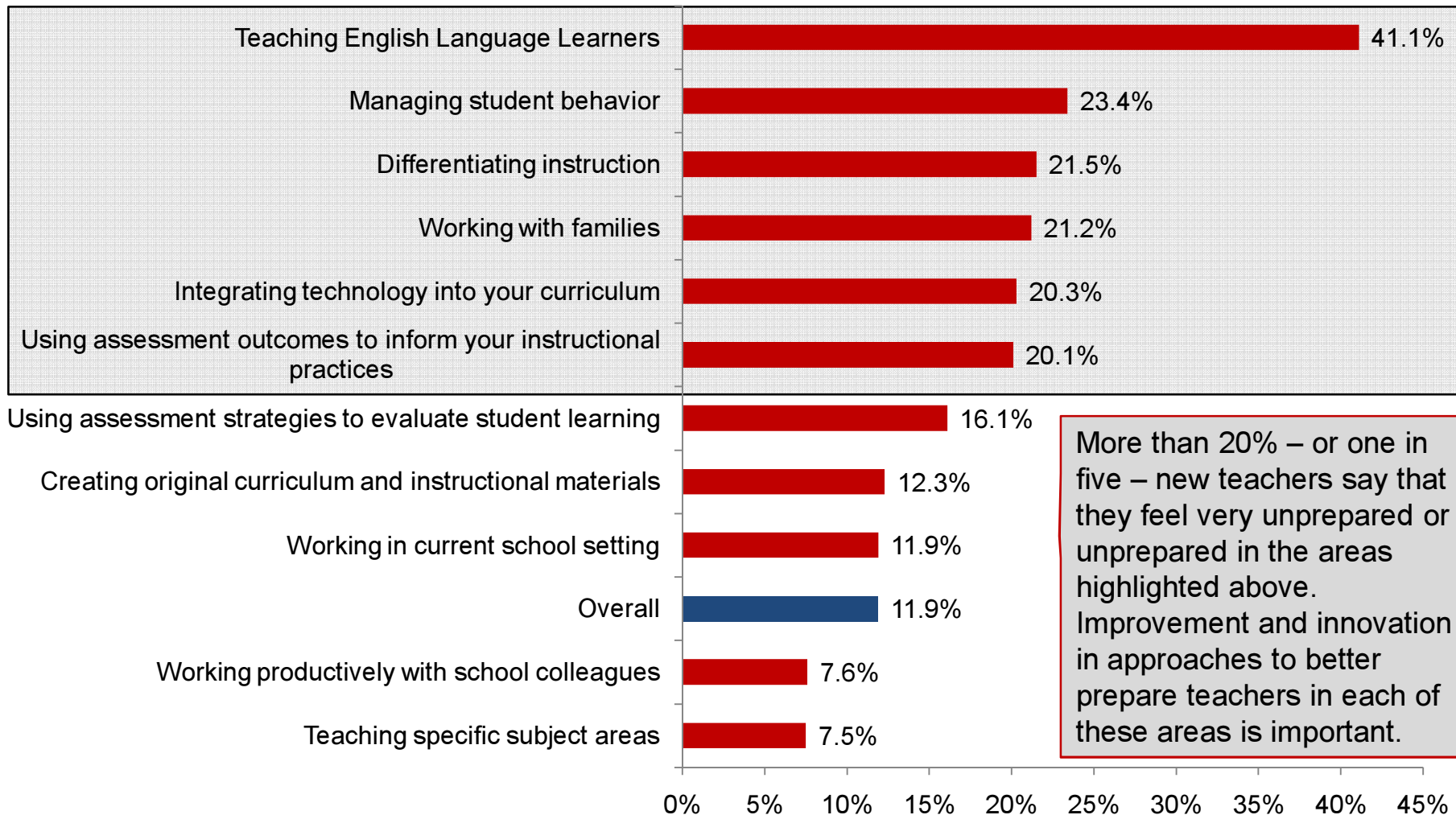
## Overall, Teachers Feel Most Prepared to Teach Specific Subject Areas, and to Work with School Colleagues

When you began teaching, how well did your preparation program prepare you for the following challenges?  
(Percent of teachers reporting very prepared or prepared)



## Teachers Are Most Likely to Report Feeling Unprepared or Very Unprepared to Teach English Language Learners

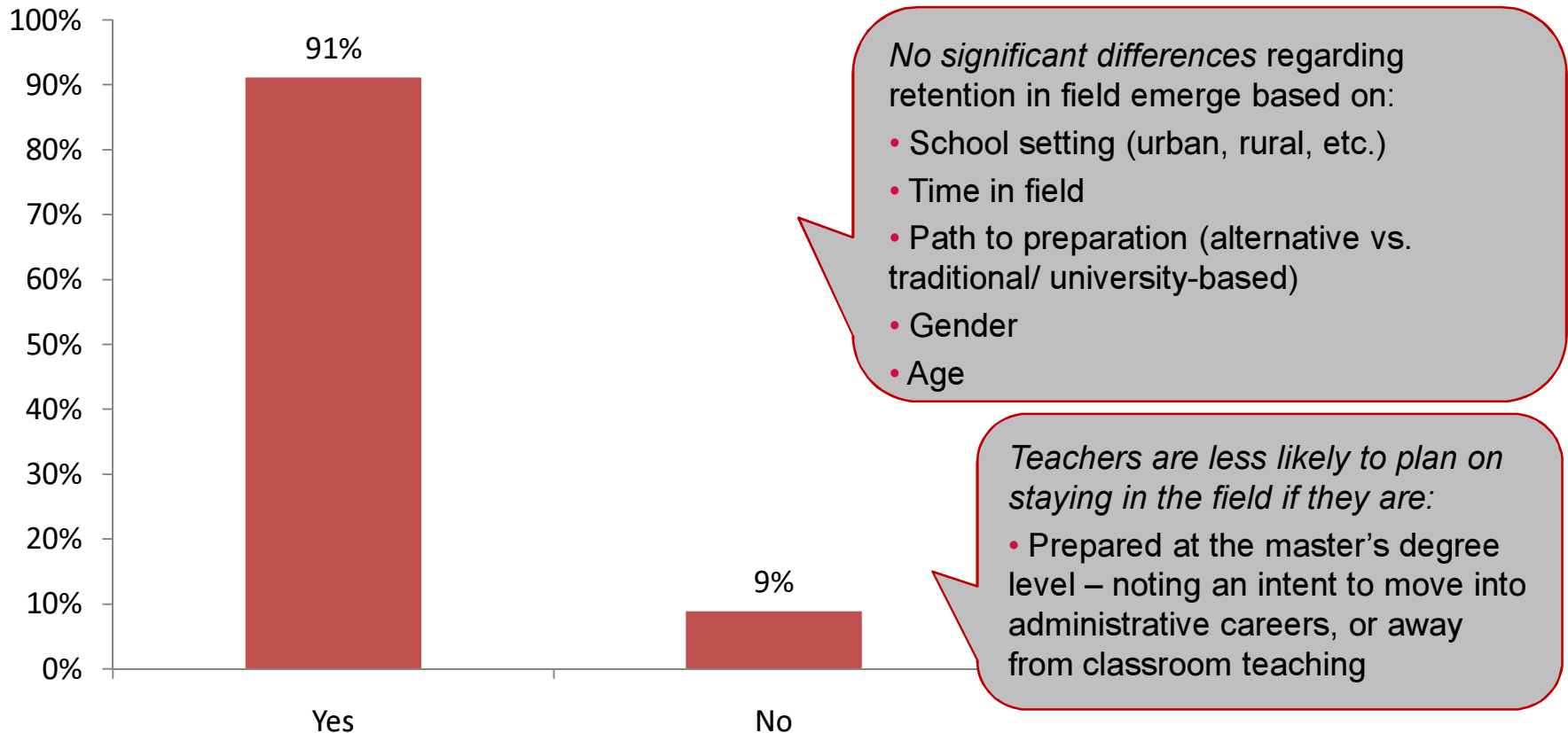
When you began teaching, how well did your preparation program prepare you for the following challenges?  
(Percent of teachers reporting very unprepared or unprepared)



More than 20% – or one in five – new teachers say that they feel very unprepared or unprepared in the areas highlighted above. Improvement and innovation in approaches to better prepare teachers in each of these areas is important.

## Retention is Another Important Outcome and Success Measure: Overwhelmingly, New Educators *Plan on Staying in The Field*

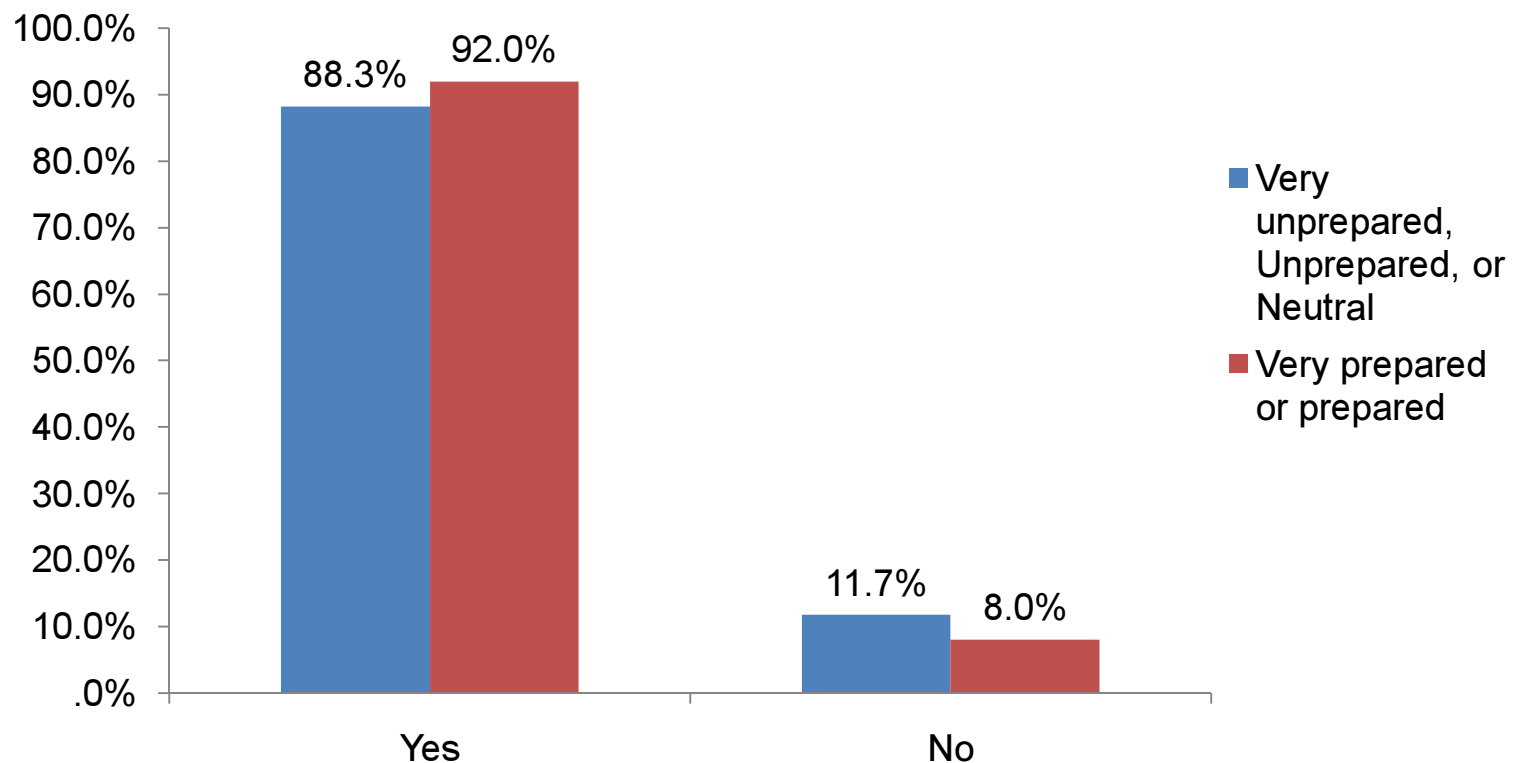
Do you anticipate remaining in your current position in the future?



**Studies have shown that as many as 1/3 of teachers actually leave the field annually – so understanding the drivers of attrition is crucial.**

# There is A Significant and Strong Connection Between Intent to Stay in the Field and Perceived Initial Level of Preparation

Do you anticipate remaining in your current position in the future (i.e. teacher or administrator)?

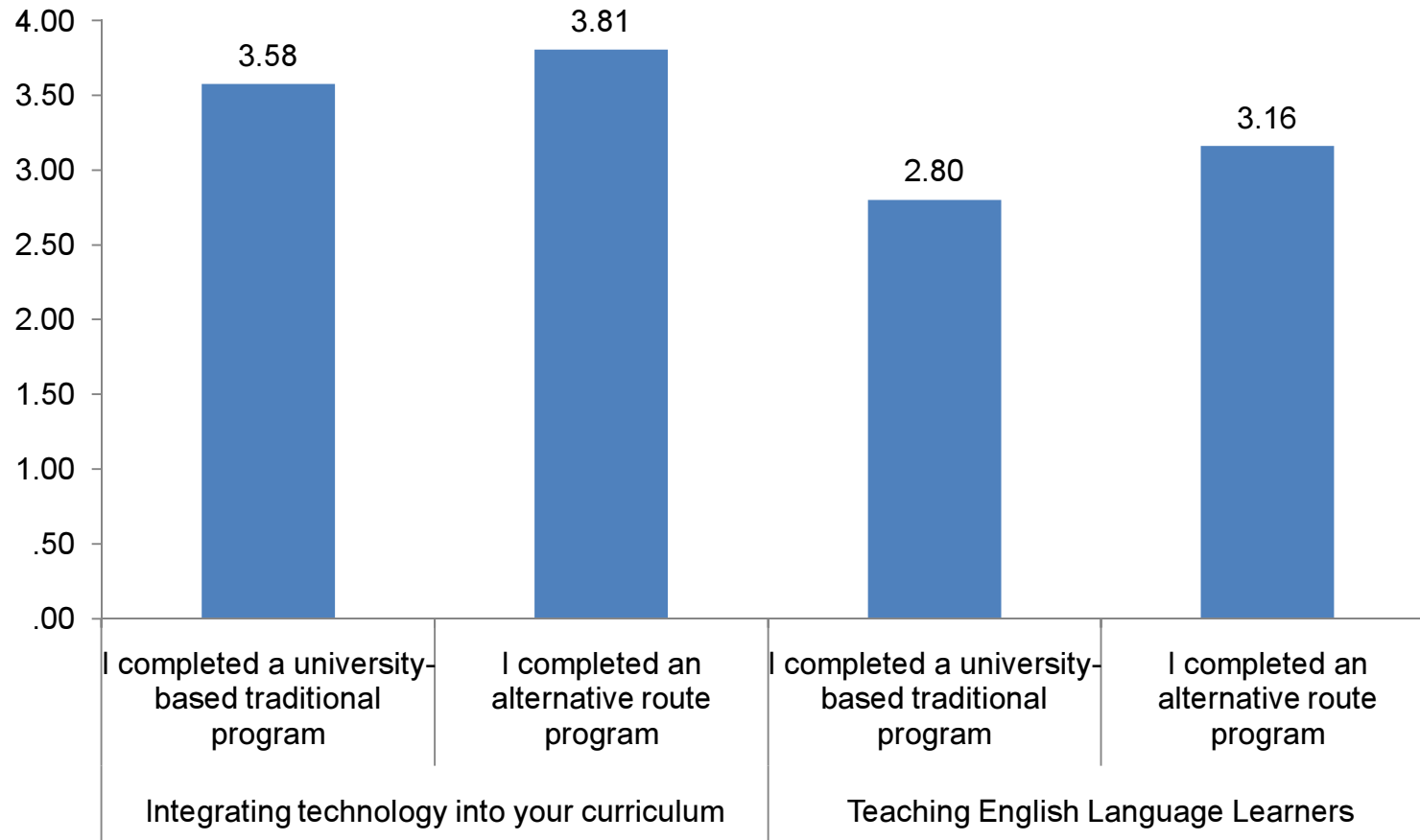


**92% of teachers who report being very prepared or prepared anticipate staying in the field vs. 88% of those who report feeling less prepared.**

### Overall, No Significant Differences in Overall Educator Preparation or Plans to Stay in the Profession Emerge by Pathway to Teaching

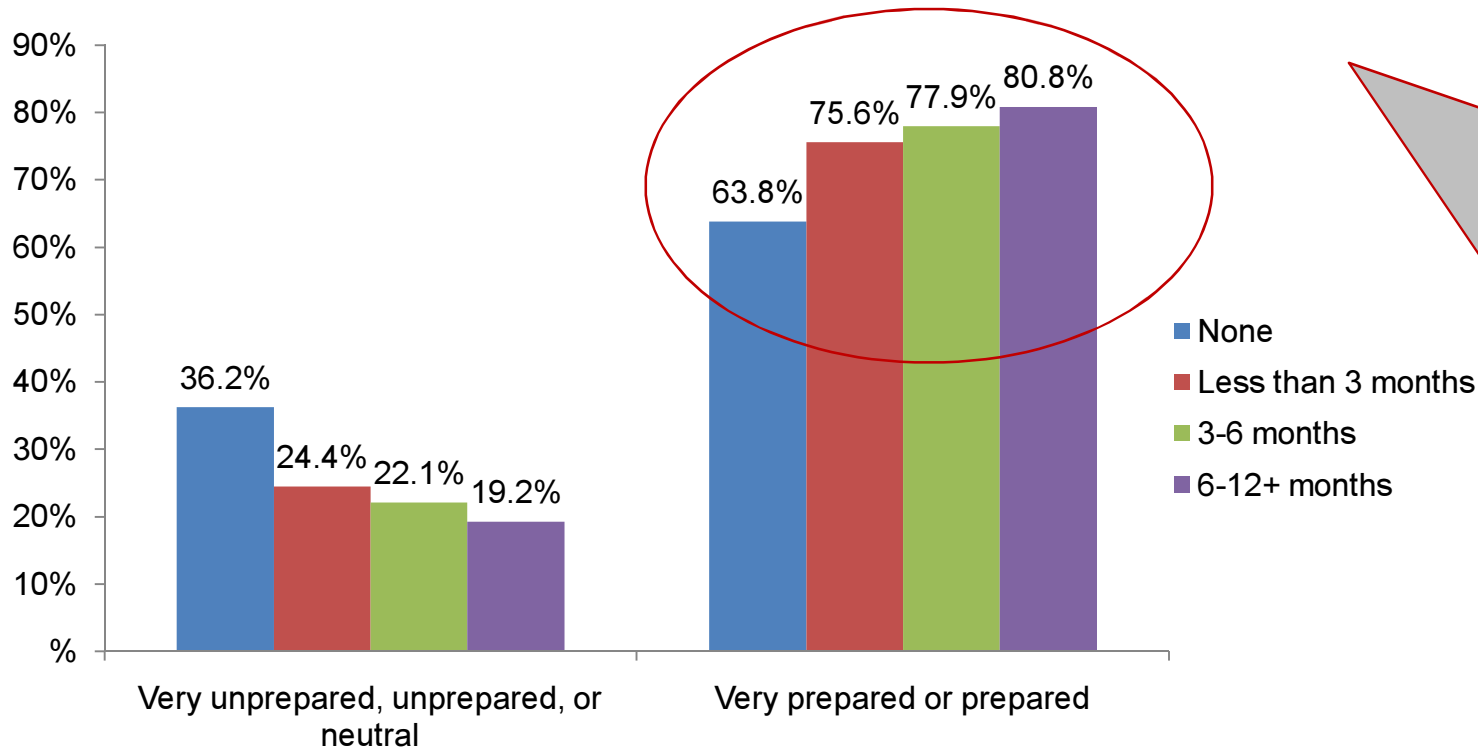
- There is no statistically significant difference between those educators who noted that they were prepared via alternative vs. traditional routes overall in terms of their:
  - Overall preparation for the field
  - Intent to stay in the field
- The inherent diversity in the teacher education programs reviewed and the diversity of the alternative route programs reviewed makes comparison between “alternative” vs. “traditional, university-based routes”\*
  - University routes completed by respondents include a wide range of public and private institutions, institutions located in different states and operating under different state standards
  - Alternative routes include
    - Academy for Urban School Leaders, Transition to Teaching, Troops to Teachers, TFA, University-based alternative route programs, District-based programs, State-based programs

## However, Teachers Who Were Prepared via Alternative Routes Report Feeling Better Prepared to Integrate Technology and Teach English Language Learners



**More analysis is needed to discern what alternative route programs are doing to better prepare new teachers in these areas.**

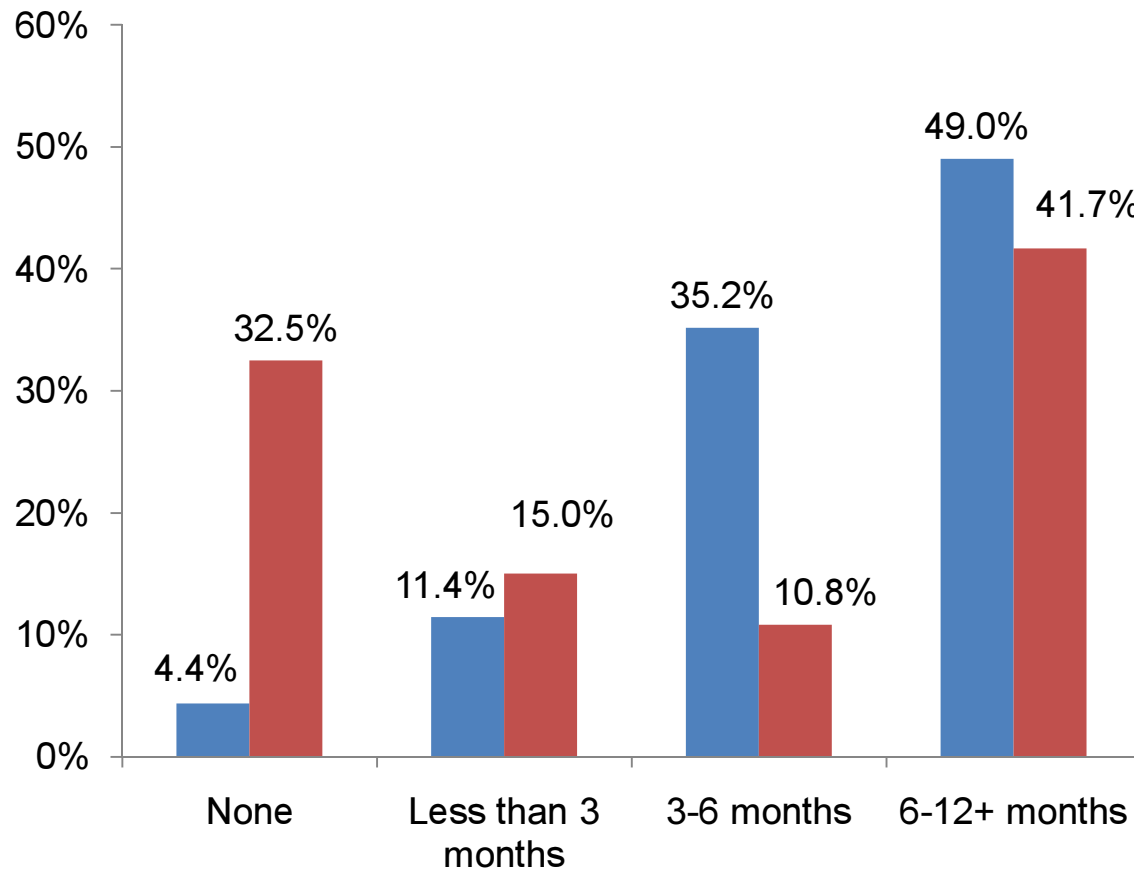
## Duration of Field Placement Plays a Significant Role in Producing Teachers That Feel Better Prepared – Longer Field Experiences Are Linked to Higher Levels of Perceived Initial Preparation



While only 63.8% of teachers with no field experience report that they felt very prepared or prepared when they first started teaching, 80.8% of teachers with 6-12 months or more of field experience felt prepared.

**This suggests that field experience builds confidence and is linked to classroom performance. With evidence that field experience matters and a national push to incorporate more field-based experiences, schools of education should be exploring ways to provide these longer experiences to students.**

## Students Prepared Through Traditional, University-Based Programs Are More Likely to Report a Longer Field Experience



■ Traditional, university-based program  
■ Alternative program

84.2% of students prepared through traditional teacher education programs report field experiences of longer than 6 months, whereas only 52.5% of teachers prepared through alternative programs report field experiences of that length.

Questions?

Kristen Fox  
Program Director  
Eduventures, Inc.  
[kfox@eduventures.com](mailto:kfox@eduventures.com)